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Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons on her mission to Georgia

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit to the Human Rights Council the report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, on her mission to Georgia from 12 to 22 March 2018.

In her report, the Independent Expert assesses, to the extent possible, the implementation of international instruments, and national laws and policies, pertaining to the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons in Georgia. On the basis of the information gathered prior to, during and after the visit, the Independent Expert analyses the challenges faced in the realization of all human rights by older persons, paying particular attention to ostracized persons and groups. She also examines the measures taken to foster the implementation of existing law and policies that could contribute to the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons.

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Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons on her mission to Georgia*

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* Circulated in the language of submission only.

I. Introduction

1. The Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 33/5, conducted an official visit to Georgia from 12 to 22 March 2018, at the invitation of the Government. The purpose of the visit was to identify, to the extent possible, best practices and gaps in the implementation of existing laws relating to the promotion and protection of the rights of older person in Georgia. The Independent Expert was not able to assess the situation in the territories of Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia, in the context of her visit. On the basis of the information gathered prior to, during and after the visit, the Independent Expert studied the status of the realization of rights by older persons, and the challenges that they faced.

2. During her visit, the Independent Expert met with representatives of the offices of the President and the Prime Minister, numerous representatives of the Government, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, researchers, academia and civil society, and also with others working on the rights of older persons and older persons themselves in, inter alia, the regions of Gori, Kazreti, Savshebi (a settlement for internally displaced persons) and Tbilisi.

3. The Independent Expert thanks the Government of Georgia for its invitation, and for the cooperation and excellent support that she received throughout her visit. She also thanks the United Nations country team, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and, in particular, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), its Special Procedures Branch and its office for South Caucasus in Tbilisi, for their outstanding support in the preparation and execution of the visit.

II. Background and context

4. Georgia is the country with the highest average age in the Southern Caucasus region. According to the 2014 census, Georgia has a population of 3,729,635, and every fifth person is aged 60 or over.[1] The proportion of the older population aged 65 years or over is expected to continue to grow from 14.2 per cent in 2010 to 21.1 per cent in 2030. The share of those aged 80 years and over will increase from 3.2 per cent to 4.2 per cent over the same period.[2] The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has projected that, by 2050, 32 per cent of people in Georgia will be over 60.[3]

5. According to the United Nations World Population Ageing report, Georgia ranks thirty-seventh among 201 nations and territories in terms of ageing. It also ranks high (29) on the Global AgeWatch Index 2015.[4]

6. In addition to the slow demographic growth of Georgia, the country has a particularly high rate of emigration. Net emigration rates from Georgia (including in the territories of Abkhazia, Georgia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia) between 1990 and 2010 were the third highest among the countries of the world, when more than 1 million inhabitants left the country.[5]

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[1] See http://ejshs.net/journals_n/1507124275.pdf.

[2] Economic Commission for Europe, Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing: Georgia, United Nations, Geneva, 2015, p. ix.

[3] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Population Ageing 2013, New York, 2013.

[4] See www.helpage.org/global-agewatch/population-ageing-data/country-ageing-data/?country=Georgia.

[5] United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Population Situation Analysis (PSA): Georgia 2014, Final Report, Tbilisi, 2015, p. 34.

7. Even though the whole country is demographically aged, there are important differences between the age structures of the regions and between ethnic groups. As a result of important rural-to-urban migration in the peak economically active ages, older persons tend to be left behind in the countryside, where the median age is 40.07 years, compared to 35.19 in urban areas.[6] The region with the oldest age structure is Racha-Lechkhumi, where persons 60 years of age or older account for 38 per cent of the population and the median age is 49 years. The Guria, Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti, Imereti and Kakheti regions also have a relatively large percentage of the population over 50 years of age.[7] With regard to ethnic minorities, one in 10 Kurds is 60 years of age or older (median age of 28 years), and four in 10 Ukrainians are 60 years of age or older (median age of 52.6 years).[8] Such different age structures might require targeted approaches.

III. Administrative, legal, institutional and policy frameworks

8. Georgia is a post-Soviet country in the South Caucasus, whose development has been affected by civil unrest and armed conflict. The brief armed conflict with the Russian Federation in August 2008 resulted in destruction and displacement, a tense situation after the armed conflict and the recognition of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia by the Russian Federation. According to the latest statistics on displacement since the armed conflict, there are 278,103 internally displaced persons in Georgia.[9] Access to conflict-affected areas remains problematic, while many vulnerable residents are in need of basic services.[10]

9. Georgia is a lower-middle-income country, where 25 per cent of the population lives below the poverty threshold of $2.50 a day. Over the past decade, economic growth has averaged 3.7 per cent annually, although unemployment has been as high as 16.5 per cent. Although the Human Development Index for 2015 was 0.769, the incidence of social exclusion and income disparities remains high, with a Gini coefficient of 0.48 (2011).

10. Georgia has acceded to or ratified several international treaties relevant to older persons. It is party to the main international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the optional protocols thereto; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Optional Protocol thereto; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the first two optional protocols thereto. Georgia is a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and

[6] See Ralph Hakkert, Population Dynamics in Georgia: An Overview Based on the 2014 General Population Census Data, UNFPA Office in Georgia, 2017, p. 40; and Bart de Bruijn and Maka Chitanava, Ageing and Older Persons in Georgia: An Overview Based on the 2014 General Population Census Data, UNFPA Office in Georgia, 2017, p. 22.

[7] UNFPA, Population Situation Analysis (PSA) (see footnote 5), p. 6.

[8] See Mzia Shelia, "Population aging in Georgia under conditions of economic crisis", European Population Conference 2006 (available from http://epc2006.princeton.edu/abstracts/60107), p. 3. See also de Bruijn and Chitanava, Ageing and Older Persons in Georgia (see footnote 6), p. 22.

[9] In a fact sheet for March 2018, UNHCR provides the following figures as at 31 December 2017: 278,103 internally displaced persons, including persons living in a situation similar to that of internal displacement and returnees in Abkhazia; 540 asylum seekers, 587 stateless persons and 2,091 refugees, including 614 persons in a refugee like situation in Abkhazia. According to national law, people living in a situation similar to that of internal displacement have the status of internally displaced persons. These are persons of concern to UNHCR and the entire system of the United Nations, who continue to need humanitarian support. The UNHCR categorization of persons living in a situation similar to that of internal displacement ("in IDP-like situation") in no way has an impact on their right to return. See also de Bruijn and Chitanava, Ageing and Older Persons in Georgia (see footnote 6), p. 23.

[10] United Nations Country Team in Georgia, United Nations Development Assistance Network 2011 – 2015.

party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

11. Georgia has not signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance or the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. While it has signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it has not yet ratified it.

12. Georgia is a party to fundamental International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, including the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105), the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). It is not party to the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) or to the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

13. The State is yet to ratify a number of other ILO conventions and recommendations relevant to older persons, inter alia, the Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140), the Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967 (No. 128), the Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140), the Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), the Nursing Personnel Convention, 1977 (No. 149), the Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150), the Maintenance of Social Security Rights Convention, 1982 (No. 157), the Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160), the Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 (No. 168), the Protection of Workers' Claims (Employer's Insolvency) Convention, 1992 (No. 173), the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), the Labour Statistics Recommendation, 1985 (No. 170), the Labour Relations (Public Service) Recommendation, 1978 (No. 159), the Nursing Personnel Recommendation, 1977 (No. 157) and the Income Security Recommendation, 1944 (No. 67).

14. At the regional level, Georgia is a member of the Council of Europe and a participating State in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It ratified the European Convention on Human Rights on 20 May 1999 and is subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. In April 2017, Georgia also ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). It has also ratified the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

15. Georgia has signed an Association Agreement with the European Union in view of gradual harmonization of all sectors with European Union standards.

16. The Constitution is the supreme law of Georgia and recognizes the supremacy of international treaties over national law, unless treaty provisions are in conflict with those of the Constitution. It provides guarantees for human rights protection, non-discrimination and gender equality. At the national level, the Government of Georgia has taken important steps to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. The recent constitutional reform was designed to further strengthen guarantees for freedoms and human rights protection through progressive provisions and more balanced, inclusive and decentralized governance.

17. Georgia has adopted a national strategy for the protection of human rights (2014–2020) and recently renewed its action plan on human rights for 2018-2020, incorporating the recommendations of international organizations, civil society and the Office of the Public Defender (ombudsman).

18. Together with the Economic Commission for Europe, in 2015 Georgia developed a road map to guide the way forward for policymakers, civil society representatives and others working in support of older persons. A national interdisciplinary working group

comprising experts from a range of areas was established to help to draft a road map.2 The 2017-2018 national action plan for a State policy on older persons in Georgia was recently adopted to translate the road map into concrete actions, together with a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

19. The Office of the Public Defender maintains A status accreditation under the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles) and plays an important role in promoting and protecting the rights of older persons. The Public Defender is in charge of monitoring and protecting human rights and reinforcing the law, and provides feedback on complaints relating to violations of rights and freedoms set forth by the Constitution and national legislation, as well as the international treaties to which the State is a party. Even though it does not have a specific department, some issues of relevance to older persons fall under its responsibility, and the Public Defender includes a chapter on the conditions of the rights of older persons in an annual report on the situation of human rights. The Independent Expert was informed in her meetings that inadequate resources prevent the Office (housed in premises, already in poor condition, that were seriously damaged in a minor earthquake) from effectively discharging its mandate.

20. Although reforms aimed at establishing an enabling environment for an impartial independent judiciary are ongoing, the protection afforded to basic human rights remains fragile, while access to justice and respect for the rule of law require further strengthening (see A/HRC/36/65).

21. While responsibility for older persons in Georgia is shared by several ministries, it mainly lies with the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, which is in charge of developing social protection policies and related programmes and laws. Several of its departments are of relevance to older persons, including the Health-Care Department, the Labour and Employment Policy Department, the Social Protection Department, the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking, the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health, and the Social Services Agency.

22. The Social Services Agency, an independent entity under the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, and its territorial offices administer State social and health protection programmes, including pensions, social assistance, health insurance and primary health-care programmes for persons with disabilities. It receives applications for social assistance, takes decisions on the eligibility of applicants, manages data and informs the population about social programmes and the procedures for application. The agency also coordinates admission to homes for older persons, which are administered by the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance for Victims of Trafficking, which also administers shelters for victims of domestic violence. In addition, private organizations registered with the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs and funded through the social rehabilitation and child-care programme provide services for older persons.

23. In order to thoroughly address the issues of gender equality and women's empowerment, an interagency commission has been established under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister. The recently created Interagency Council for the Prevention of Domestic Violence also adopts a multidisciplinary approach in its work. The Department of Human Rights Protection was recently established within the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the aim of ensuring prompt responses to and effective investigations into cases of domestic violence and violence against women, crimes committed on discriminatory grounds, hate crimes, trafficking in human beings and crimes committed by or against minors.

IV. Main findings

A. Discrimination

24. Under the Constitution of Georgia, all persons, including older persons, are equal before the law and may apply to the Constitutional Court to seek judicial review of any

legislation or policy deemed to contravene the provisions of the Constitution. Older persons may also report any violations of the law to the relevant authorities, who will investigate the complaint and, as appropriate, take action to enforce the law. Victims, or persons acting on their behalf, may also lodge a complaint with the police.

25. In 2014, Georgia adopted an anti-discrimination law, article 1 of which clearly prohibits discrimination on the basis of a person's gender identity or sexual orientation, or on the basis of race, colour, language, national, ethnic or social belonging, sex, pregnancy or maternity, marital or health status, disability, age, nationality, origin, place of birth, place of residence, internal displacement, material or social status, religion or belief, political or any other ground.

26. The provisions of the above-mentioned law provide for the elimination of all forms of discrimination, be they direct, indirect or multiple, and for the protection of all persons to ensure their equal enjoyment of rights. According to the law, discrimination must be prohibited in all spheres, both public and private, including labour relations, social security and health care, access to education and learning processes, culture and creative art, science, elections, civil and political activities, justice, State services, use of goods and services, housing, entrepreneurship and banking, and use of natural resources.

27. The Order of the Minister for Labour, Health and Social Affairs on approving minimum service standards for the elderly and persons with disabilities in round-the-clock specialized institutions provides for a non-discriminatory approach to beneficiaries, and includes special protection measures against violence, discrimination and negligence.

28. Within the framework of the State's strategy for the national labour market (2015–2018) and the action plan of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, Georgia has developed a State programme focused on vocational training in demanded professions and internships and on improving the qualifications of job seekers, thereby increasing their likelihood of finding employment. One of the most challenging yet important features of the programme is that there is no age limit for job seekers; it does not, however, provide for any particular support for or focus on the needs of old-age job seekers.

29. Age discrimination in the labour market is frequent. Even people in their late forties are often stereotyped as lacking dynamism, efficiency and skills. As there are no unemployment benefits, older workers who become unemployed are left without any income.

B. Violence, maltreatment and abuse

30. Gender-based violence seems to be socially tolerated in Georgia owing to the persistence of entrenched patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes (A/HRC/32/42/Add.3, para. 9). According to a recent report prepared by the Office of the Public Defender on the situation of human rights and freedoms in Georgia, common forms of violence include neglect and physical and psychological abuse, which also involves humiliation and denial of contact with other people, and other forms of financial abuse.[11]

31. Acts of violence by family members against older persons seem to be frequent in Georgia; and it is reasonable to assume that much abuse goes unreported, given the enormous importance attributed to the institution of the family. Many have the cultural expectation that older persons will be cared for by the multigenerational family and indeed, a significant part of care is provided within the family. The lack of detailed information about mistreatment and abuse of and violence against older persons made it impossible for the mandate holder to identify their causes, thus impeding the development of adequate prevention measures.[12]

[11] See Public Defender of Georgia, "Presentation of femicide monitoring results", 18 June 2018.

[12] See United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality, Special Report: Evaluation of Protection Mechanisms from Domestic Violence, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), 2017.

32. The 2008 law on the elimination of domestic violence, and protection of and support for victims of it refers also to older persons, who may be particularly vulnerable to acts of abuse. The law assigns the State, through its authorized bodies, the responsibility to support and ensure introduction and application of mechanisms for the prevention of domestic violence, such as the analysis and the study of risk factors of domestic violence, legal methods, the keeping of statistics, information-education campaigns and the organization and delivery of special education courses. To detect and eliminate domestic violence, protective or restrictive orders may be issued as part of criminal and civil law procedures. The law sets out the responsibilities of the police and law enforcement authorities, provides for the possibility of shelter, and calls for the establishment of rehabilitation centres for perpetrators of abuse.

33. The Government has also adopted a number of strategies and policies with the specific objective of achieving gender equality through the empowerment of women and by combating domestic violence.

34. In order to strengthen policies aimed at the elimination of gender discrimination, violence against women and girls and domestic violence, in 2017 Georgia ratified the Istanbul Convention and introduced relevant amendments to national law and legislative acts. In this connection, the State is currently conducting an awareness-raising campaign for the prevention of domestic violence and violence against women.

35. While older persons are protected by law from neglect, maltreatment, abuse and violence, there seems to be no dedicated programme to prevent and address abuses against older persons. Even though the report prepared by the Office of the Public Defender refers to five State-funded shelters victims of domestic violence and three crisis centres for victims of domestic violence and violence against women that are currently available,[13] there are no temporary shelters catering for the specific needs of older victims of violence, maltreatment or abuse.

C. Adequate standard of living and autonomy

36. The Government's redistributive policies have played a significant role in reducing poverty in Georgia. Between 2006 and 2012, the percentage of the population living in extreme poverty fell from 5.4 per cent to 3.7 per cent. Despite comprehensive reforms, many older persons remain affected by severe poverty. Economic growth and other progress made in improving people's living standards should extend to more people if poverty is to effectively addressed.

37. In 2015, Georgia was ranked 70 out of 188 countries and territories — namely, in the high human development category — in the Human Development Index. When inequality is taken into account, however, it reveals significant disparities.[14]

38. Poverty rates are higher in rural areas and in the east of the country, in particular in Mtskheta-Mtianeti and Shida Kartli, in households with dependents and households headed by women, and among internally displaced people and households with no working members. The rural development strategy for 2017–2020 identified the ageing rural population as one of the key challenges in rural areas. The highlands of Georgia are characterized by, inter alia, extreme poverty, poor infrastructure and poor access to health care.[15] Since September 2016, persons living permanently in high mountainous regions have received a 20 per cent increase in State pension and social benefits.

39. Applications submitted to the Public Defender in 2017 confirm that many older persons live in grave social and economic conditions. The majority of them face the threat

[13] See Public Defender of Georgia, "Presentation of femicide monitoring results" (see footnote 11).

[14] See UNDP, "Human Development for Everyone", Briefing note for countries on the 2016 Human Development Report, Georgia.

[15] Rural Development Strategy of Georgia (2017–2020), available from http://enpard.ge/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Rural-Development-Strategy-of-Georgia-2017-2020.pdf.

of poverty, homelessness and isolation. A large number of older persons have no access to social services or adequate living conditions.

40. The contributions made by the national social security system accounts for a large part of the resources of older persons, and help to ensure the financial security of a large proportion of the older population. Nevertheless, many older persons are among the persistent poor.

41. Between 2012 and 2014, the Government significantly expanded social spending, leading to growth of 60 per cent in real terms, led by pensions, health and other direct transfers benefiting older persons, with an important impact on poverty reduction. In 2013 and 2014, the new Government prioritized social expenditure over other objectives and raised social benefits. Since then, public spending on health care, education and pensions has increased.

42. According to the midterm action plan for 2016–2019, the elimination of the worst forms of poverty in the country remains a challenge to the attainment of a decent standard of living for the elderly. The social protection and retirement benefit programme therefore aims at developing an efficient and financially sustainable pension, social welfare system and social services and monetary benefits for vulnerable groups. At present, the retirement package for old-age pensioners (women from the age of 60 and men from the age of 65) and State compensation are distributed within the framework of the programme, an amount roughly equivalent to the current minimum wage.

43. Although housing is an essential element of active ageing and of the ability of older persons to live an autonomous life, it is currently lacking for many of the most vulnerable. The State should have a coherent and sustainable housing policy, and be active in providing social and affordable housing to older persons.[16]

44. The phenomenon of persons — including older persons — living in the street has recently received greater attention from State authorities; quantifying the exact needs of those affected is however difficult, given that statistical information is not disaggregated by age group. In the early 1990s, housing in Georgia was privatized, usually at a nominal, symbolic price. Many households sold or lost their properties in the years characterized by civil unrest and economic hardship, leaving a number of today's older persons without their own place to live. Some of them live with relatives, while others in residential care homes, even though they may not actually be in need of care.

45. The privatization of housing at nominal value led to a number of people becoming home owners, even though they were unable to bear the maintenance and renovation costs involved. As commercial banks do not provide housing loans to pensioners, many older persons have no way of investing in the improvement of their own living conditions.[17] Apartment buildings are often in poor condition, particularly the areas used jointly by all tenants, such as elevators.[18] According to information received by the mandate holder from the Public Defender, the situation and unsuitable living conditions of older persons and persons with disabilities in the so-called "cardboard house" in Batumi remain a concern.

46. Despite the Government's efforts to provide housing to persons living in settlements, access to water, sanitation and health services is limited. The living conditions of displaced women, in particular older women (who account for 60 per cent of the displaced), place them in a vulnerable and marginalized position. Generally, older internally displaced women live in poor economic conditions, and are concerned about the cost of medicines and the small pensions they receive (A/HRC/32/42/Add.3, para. 41). As younger family members are often displaced at an earlier stage, many older persons end up alone in separate collective centres.

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[16] See Vladimer Vardosanidze and Elena Dajania, *Social Housing – Georgian Reality in International Context*, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, August 2013; and de Bruijn and Chitanava, Ageing and Older Persons in Georgia (see footnote 6), p. 36.

[17] Economic Commission for Europe, Road Map (see footnote 2), p. 30.

[18] De Bruijn and Chitanava, *Ageing and Older Persons in Georgia* (see footnote 6), p. 36.

47. Larger cities, such as Tbilisi, Batumi and Rustavi, have quite a well-developed transport network. In 2012, 40 buses of the Tbilisi Transport Company were adapted for persons with disabilities, and in metro stations, steps were specially marked to make them visible for the visually impaired. Outside the main cities, transport is provided mostly by *marshrutka* (private minibuses), which are not necessarily suited to persons with limited mobility, and in some regions there is no public transport at all. While older persons benefit from preferential rates, the lack of regulation of *marshrutkas* affects the quality of their service, and there seem to be instances of discriminatory behaviour by drivers towards them.[19]

48. Although Georgia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2014 and the Government adopted a plan of action to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities for 2014–2016, and relevant regulations with regard to spatial arrangements and architectural and planning elements for persons with disabilities, the accessibility of public buildings in Georgia remains limited. Most public buildings are not adapted to cater for the needs of older persons, in particular those with limited mobility or with disabilities. Barriers in the physical environment of health-care institutions, public spaces and buildings should therefore be removed, and adaptations made accordingly, including in the transport system. Relevant standards should also be developed.[20]

49. On 20 March 2015, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a legislative package to reform the legal capacity system, which restricted all rights of a person, to move to a system of legal guardianship under which the needs of the person are identified by individual assessment. As a result, the Government also approved a number of bylaws. An analysis of the trend in implementation of legislative changes showed, however, that in practice no effective changes had actually been made. In addition to certain legislative gaps, an analysis of court practices by the Public Defender revealed, inter alia, the complete deprivation of legal capacity and plenary guardianship, even though the legal amendments reconfirmed by the Government prohibit them.

50. Climate change and its adverse impact on ecosystems and the economy are a serious threat for Georgia in the context of sustainable development. Extreme climate events, such as floods, have increased significantly, while droughts are becoming increasingly frequent in western Georgia.[21]

51. The effects of climate change generally have a disproportionate effect on older persons owing to their reduced mobility, dependence and physical, emotional and mental conditions. These factors are often aggravated by poverty and location. Moreover, older persons tend to be excluded, isolated and left behind in natural disasters and emergencies.

52. Floods have become one of the biggest risks in Georgia, often causing harm to residential areas and agricultural land in its different regions. The consequences particularly affect older persons: 84 per cent of people aged 65 years or older are in fact self-employed and work as subsistence farmers.

53. Older internally displaced persons may find it particularly challenging to rebuild their lives as they tend to be more emotionally attached to their town, their neighbourhood and their home. The erosion of family support caused by displacement and the fact that many older persons remain firmly anchored in the pre-displacement reality can have a significant impact on their psychosocial well-being.

54. The State strategy for internally displaced persons aims to create conditions for the dignified and safe return of such persons and to support those who have spontaneously returned to their places of permanent residence. It also aims to support decent living conditions for displaced populations and their integration into all aspects of society. In addition to the monthly basic pension, internally displaced persons, whether living in a collective centre or in private accommodation, receive a monthly allowance. In 2014, the

[19] Economic Commission for Europe, Road Map (see footnote 2), p. 28.

[20] Public Defender of Georgia, Report on the Situation of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2017.

[21] See Rural Development Strategy of Georgia (see footnote 15).

Government increased the monthly allowance to 45 lari, and decided that those persons with a taxable income of at least 1,250 lari per person per month would no longer be eligible for the monthly allowance.

D. Social protection and right to social security

55. The social security system in Georgia significantly contributes to the alleviation of old-age poverty. It comprises social assistance schemes, an old-age scheme, social services, a social safety net and social compensation schemes. Targeted social assistance is one of the main components of the system available to the most disadvantaged groups. In 2006, a proxy means-test system based on a wider range of variables, such as income, family size or special needs, was introduced, to better target social protection. Nonetheless, the most vulnerable segments of the population, such as older persons, are not necessarily the first to receive social assistance.

56. The State promotes the development and delivery of a wide range of social services, including residential, alternative and community- and family-based services. The services target, inter alia, older persons and persons with disabilities. Services include rehabilitation assistance for persons with disabilities, day-care centres and community-based services.

57. The State has a universal, non-contributory old-age pension scheme that plays an important role in the reduction of poverty, providing a basic level of protection for many older persons. The scheme is flat-rate, unconditional and universal in nature, payable to any person who reaches retirement age (60 years for women, 65 years for men), unless the person receives a pension from another country, in the case of dual citizenship, or the person works in the government sector. It also provides men over the age of 65 and women over 60 with a modest replacement rate that is a percentage of their average wage (about 18 per cent). Cash benefits are provided for persons with disabilities, and also in the event of the loss of a household breadwinner.

58. Even though the old-age pension has been gradually raised, it remains too low to assure an adequate standard of living; the persistent poor in fact includes many older persons. The Independent Expert notes that the current pension has a low replacement level and actually also has, together with the old-age pension, a poverty alleviation function around the minimum subsistence level. Non-contributory pensions can, however, play a key role in ensuring that women have access to at least a basic pension, even if the benefit received is insufficient to meet their needs.

59. Under the current pension system, all pensioners receive the same amount, irrespective of contributory years or the average salary. The system is not means tested, as recommended by ILO, and may incentivize informal work. There are also concerns about its long-term sustainability, given the demographic dynamics in Georgia.

60. Given that the current pension system fails to address the challenges the country is facing, a reform process has been undertaken. A draft law submitted to the Parliament by the Government on 29 December 2017 envisages the introduction of an accumulative pension system based on a defined contribution plan, namely, a semi-mandatory pension savings scheme that would be based on personal accounts. This will constitute another pillar of the pension system and will be mandatory for employees under 40 years of age once the law comes into force. As a transitional measure, persons aged 40 years or older may opt out of the system during the first five months after automatic enrolment — which could compound the situation old-age poverty, since those who opt out of the new system could be left without an adequate pension in the future. The Independent Expert is also concerned that the reform does not include key elements of solidarity, intrinsic to the mandatory pay-as-you-go schemes found in many European countries, given that periods of illness, unemployment, care or parental leave will be non-contributory. Also, the proposed system might not effectively address the risk of old-age poverty, particularly among women.

61. The social protection system is fragmented, and further undermined by a shortfall in the institutional capacity necessary to deliver quality services, or the analytical capacity

needed to measure and assess policy impact on the livelihood of the most vulnerable groups, including older persons.

62. In Georgia, there is no age-friendly policy framework, which would encourage the retention of older workers or provide incentives to hire them. There are also no age-friendly workplaces or working arrangements.

E. Education, training and lifelong learning

63. Education in old age is important for personal growth, paid or non-paid work, active citizenship, local development and consolidating intergenerational relationships. Georgia does not have an established system of continuing education to allow workers to improve their skills or to acquire new ones. Older persons in Georgia can register for and attend university courses provided that they pass the entrance exam.

64. While a new education strategy has been prepared, it continues to focus on qualifying younger persons for a profession, without taking adequately into account the fact that older workers in many professions require ongoing training to upgrade their skills.

F. Care

65. The health-care system in Georgia has undergone a transformation since the State declared its independence. In 2007, the Government introduced a medical insurance programme for the poorest 20 per cent of the population; in 2013, it established a State-funded universal health programme, which provides a basic package of primary health-care services, covering also emergency medical care in outpatient and inpatient settings. It does not, however, cover chronic illnesses or recurrent expenditure for outpatient drugs for persons who were previously uninsured.[22]

66. According to the World Bank, persons 65 years of age or older are particularly vulnerable to catastrophic out-of-pocket payments exceeding 10 per cent of total consumption.[23] Despite the risks involved, older persons apparently prefer to self-medicate and avoid such costs — a situation that also explains the underutilization of outpatient care services in Georgia. Adequate coverage should be ensured, particularly in the case of persons suffering from chronic diseases, which are frequent among the older population. In the light of the excessive focus on curative medicine that persists in the country, prevention is another area that should be developed further.

67. The national Parliament recently adopted a new strategy for developing the health-care system in Georgia by 2020, which recognizes many of the existing challenges. It builds on the previous national health-care strategy for 2011–2015, which, inter alia, identified the need to address disparities between urban and rural access to facilities. A strategy on mental health (including Alzheimer's disease) was also recently adopted.

68. Georgia does not have a comprehensive strategy on long-term care. While some elements of such care are available, others will need to be strengthened. Long-term care can be both medical and non-medical; it comprises a large spectrum of care services, which include primary, secondary and tertiary care, public health services and emergency services. An overall strategic vision of long-term care is now required as a matter of urgency to provide overall direction for the further development of such services in a comprehensive manner.

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[22] The Government explained in a submission to the mandate holder that, as from 1 July 2017, persons suffering from chronic conditions, who are registered in the targeted social assistance (TSA) scheme with a score not exceeding 100,000 are eligible for the State programme that provides drugs for chronic conditions (23 types of medicines). The programme envisages providing patients with selected drugs for chronic cardiovascular diseases, lung diseases, diabetes (type 2) and thyroid conditions.

[23] Georgia and the World Bank Group, "Promoting Prosperity for the People", 2017 (http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/393661505116118995/ECCSC-Georgia-for-web-0904.pdf).

69. In Georgia, palliative care, including outpatient and inpatient care, is available to persons who are terminally ill, under State programme. No co-payment is required for outpatient palliative care, although patients are required to cover 30 per cent of expenses for inpatient care, a cost that has a disproportionate impact on older persons.

70. The family has by tradition always played a vital role in Georgian society, and indeed continues to provide a significant amount of care for older persons. As a result of growing urbanization and the decision of many adult children to emigrate in the hope of finding better living conditions and more employment opportunities, however, older parents are often left isolated in rural or remote areas. The progressive erosion of the traditional multigenerational family setting has left an increasing number of older persons in Georgia, who often eschew institutional assistance, without a family and therefore effectively without care. As intergenerational relations change, there is a growing need for alternative solutions and forms of support, even institutional ones, to care for older persons.

71. While reliance on the family has been able assure broad coverage of care, informal caregivers today are often not adequately trained or prepared for the tasks that they need to perform. Many require practical training, taking into account the specific needs of dependent older persons, particularly those with Alzheimer's disease or afflicted by another form of dementia. Moreover, acts of violence, maltreatment, neglect and abuse sometimes go undetected within the family setting, as older persons may be reluctant to report such cases out of family loyalty, or fear of reprisal or stigma.

72. In Georgia, the care policy for older persons focuses on the delivery of services by community organizations in residential homes within the framework of the State social rehabilitation programme.

73. Georgia currently has two public homes for older persons, one in Tbilisi and the other in Kutaisi, each with an approximate capacity of 100 places. The homes operate under the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking, a legal entity of public law under the control of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs. The fund was created in 2006 on the basis of the national law on combating trafficking in persons to, inter alia, ensure decent living conditions for older persons. The home in Batumi is managed by the municipality, in collaboration with church authorities.

74. There are also several private institutions providing residential care to older persons that are funded by the State. Any entity registered with the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs may, in accordance with the rules provided by the law, act as a private service provider.

75. Internal legislative regulations and minimum standards regulate residential homes in Georgia. Monitoring of compliance of specialized institutions for older persons with the minimal standards or mechanisms overseeing enforcement of the standards is, however, inadequate; violations of the rights of older persons in such settings therefore are not sufficiently addressed. The degree of awareness of legal regulations with regard to violence and the standards of service required of providers seems extremely low, and older persons are generally not aware or informed of their rights.

76. The Kutaisi home for older persons offers good practices in several aspects; for instance, it maintains a registry on incidents, a registry on any acts of violence committed and a written account of measures taken in response to complaints. It also has a special feedback registry.

77. Besides insufficient capacity, quality of care remains an area of concern in all settings. In some old-age homes, the degree of care and living conditions for older persons are not adequate, and not suited to the individual needs of older persons. There are reports that older persons have been victims of at least some form of maltreatment. Generally, cases of violence often stay undetected or are underreported out of fear of reprisal or owing to the victims' lack of knowledge or awareness of their own rights. Scarce financing and lack of monitoring should be addressed more actively.

78. While Georgia has a very large number of doctors per capita, the number of nurses is in continual decline, leading to a ratio of nurses to doctors that is the lowest in Europe. In order to attract sufficient people into the care sector, better training opportunities, including

academic qualifications, should be provided, which will also help to portray care work as a profession with good career prospects. Only if the number of professional meet the actual needs will care providers be able to address the emotional and physical needs of older persons with compassion and dignity.

79. The State programme for social rehabilitation and childcare benefits persons with disabilities and older persons by supporting their integration into society.

80. While the home-based care currently available is insufficient to meet actual needs, there is also an insufficient number of day-care centres. The 28 public day-care centres operative at the time of writing provide home-based care to no more 60 older persons, and are therefore insufficient to cater to the needs of a significantly higher number of people. Municipalities should be equipped financially and technically, with expertise as well as with human resources, to be able to ensure that these services are available to older persons and their families. This would also help to overcome existing patriarchal structures and enable women to choose to join the workforce or to build a family as essential contributions to both economic and demographic growth.

81. Some municipalities, such as Tbilisi, engage non-profit organizations to provide home care for a fee. The Batumi municipality launched a home-based care project in 2014, providing services to 40 older persons twice a week.

82. Non-profit organizations, such as Caritas and the Red Cross, provide the largest share of home-care services in Georgia, with a focus on those living below the poverty line (as certified by the Social Services Agency). They also provide training for informal carers, nurses and medical students. Furthermore, the Home Care Coalition, an umbrella organization for seven smaller organizations engaged in home care, provides day-care services, housing, nursing homes, hospices and palliative care, and also assists in the retraining of nurses.

83. In addition, Georgia has a number of institutions for persons with disabilities, including older persons with disabilities. The Public Defender has expressed concern at systematic and individual violations of the rights of persons with disabilities, including the use of physical restraints and lack of contact of persons with disabilities with their families. The Independent Expert was also informed about a lack of qualified personnel and the limited psychosocial rehabilitation services available, while quality management and abuse prevention mechanisms are inadequate.

84. The social service system in Georgia remains weak. Social workers are overburdened, poorly paid and lack the means and conditions to work effectively. Standards of social work are missing, as is training of social workers (A/HRC/34/55/Add.1, para. 60).

85. Older persons have different patterns of disease presentation than younger adults. They respond to treatment and therapies in different ways and frequently have complex social needs relating to their chronic medical conditions. Unfortunately, the State has lost its leading role in the field of gerontological research; there is currently no gerontology or geriatric faculty at university, and only some classes are offered as part of the general programme. Furthermore, no geriatric beds or professionals seem to be currently available in hospitals.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

86. **The Independent Expert welcomes the adoption of the national action plan for a State policy on older persons in Georgia on 17 November 2017, a long-awaited step towards the transformation of policy into concrete actions for older persons. She regrets, however, that the action plan has not yet been translated, which makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the road map developed by the Economic Commission for Europe in collaboration with the Government has been embraced.**

She nonetheless hopes that the action plan will help to mainstream the rights of older persons into national policies and all government planning.

87. The Independent Expert notes the importance of the national interdisciplinary working group as a follow-up mechanism. She recommends that the existing institutional infrastructure be elevated to an interministerial coordination body, on a meta-level, with lead competence on aging issues, to ensure a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach to ageing. It is essential that the independence of such an interministerial coordination mechanism be ensured in mainstreaming a human rights-based approach into all activities, which would also greatly facilitate the implementation of the national action plan and ensure a holistic approach.

88. The Independent Expert is encouraged by the State's recognition of the importance of population dynamics for sustainable development. She notes, however, that the United Nations Partnership for Sustainable Development, while identifying key focus areas of particular relevance to the enjoyment by older persons of their human rights, such as social protection and health, does not include older persons as such among them. The Independent Expert calls upon the Government of Georgia to ensure the integration of ageing, in a rights-based manner, when formulating its next framework document. She also stresses the importance of creating conditions and possibilities for cooperation between and within generations to maintain and foster intergenerational solidarity.

89. The Independent Expert recommends that the mandate of the Office of the Public Defender be expanded to specifically include older persons, and that the Office be empowered to issue binding opinions and to request initiation of legal proceedings, or to set up a separate independent monitoring body and extend such powers to it.

90. The Independent Expert recommends that Georgia ratify the optional protocols to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

91. On the basis of the findings and observations in the present report, the Independent Expert makes the conclusions and recommendations below.

B. Recommendations for the Government

1. Study and statistics

92. The Independent Expert encourages the Government of Georgia to ensure nationwide, systematic and regular collection of disaggregated data on impediments to the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, such as any forms of discrimination based on age as sole or accumulated criterion, on exclusion, poverty and on all forms of violence, abuse and maltreatment. Given that data have to be used sensibly to avoid stigmatization and potential misuse, particular care should be exercised when collecting and analysing data to respect and enforce data protection, informational self-determination and privacy.

93. The Independent Expert recommends that Georgia build on its past leading role in the field of geriatric and gerontological research to encourage the study of social and economic problems of population aging and the enjoyment by older persons of their rights.

2. Discrimination

94. While acknowledging the Government's efforts to raise awareness of equality and to change people's attitudes and beliefs to eliminate prejudice against older persons, the Independent Expert emphasizes the need for a strategy that addresses discrimination and ageism in a coherent and multifaceted way.

95. The Independent Expert also notes the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes with regard to the roles and responsibilities of women and men within the family and in society at large. Such stereotypes are not only a root

cause of violence against women in the private and public spheres but also place women in a disadvantaged position, including in the labour market.

96. The Independent Expert recommends that the Government play a more active role in disseminating information about demographic challenges and to ensure that older persons are not represented only as being needy and vulnerable, thus effectively fighting existing ageist attitudes. A far-ranging awareness-raising campaign should be conducted to challenge existing stereotypes and misconceptions about older persons and to provide alternative views in order to change social perceptions of older persons.

97. The Independent Expert stresses the need to prohibit discrimination based on age alone in the hiring, retention, promotion and training of employees. Such an effort should be accompanied by awareness-raising about the important contribution that older persons can make as an active part of society and for employers to understand the benefits of an age-diverse workforce.

3. Violence, maltreatment and abuse

98. Reports suggest that violence against and abuse of older persons are frequently committed, including by family members. In the light of the general underreporting of cases of violence, maltreatment and abuse involving older persons, the Independent Expert emphasizes that the dissemination of information to older persons about their rights could help to counter this trend.

99. The Independent Expert stresses that laws are not enough and that further measures and mechanisms are required to detect, report on and prevent all forms of abuse of older persons in institutional care and in family settings. Protocols and processes are needed to help individuals, families, caregivers in institutional settings and community groups to understand the issues surrounding elder abuse, to recognize individuals who are at risk and to respond when appropriate. Caregivers in domestic and institutional settings should be further sensitized and trained on preventing and detecting elder abuse. The Independent Expert also stresses the need for safeguards against the financial exploitation of older persons. She welcomes the Government's expressed intention to deliver a series of training programmes in 2018 for personnel of the State Fund for Protection of and Assistance for Victims of Human Trafficking on preventing and detecting elder abuse.

100. The Independent Expert also encourages Georgia to conduct a preventive information campaign on violence against and maltreatment and abuse of older persons, offering the availability of caseworkers, who can refer older victims to professional help, including legal, medical and psychological help, and shelters.

101. Training programmes for members of law enforcement, the police, regulatory authorities, judges, lawyers and prosecutors are essential to ensure that investigations into cases of domestic violence convey the message to the community that violence and abuse against older persons are serious crimes and will be treated as such.

102. Social service providers should also be trained specifically to recognize and resolve abusive situations within families. Law enforcement should be trained to work with older persons who become victims of abuse. Given that older persons may fear to approach the police, alternative services, such as case workers, should be available to support older persons throughout the process by, for example, accompanying them to the police or helping them to find a shelter. Shelters should be designed to cater for the needs of older persons, in particular those who require a high level of medical care and assistance.

4. Adequate standard of living and autonomy

103. The Independent Expert urges the Government to ensure that aging is included in discussions on poverty, as it will play an increasingly important role to shape social assistance policies in the future.

104. The Independent Expert encourages the Government to take further steps to improve the accessibility of public buildings in Georgia, including by means of

adaptation measures for older persons with reduced mobility or with disabilities. Further measures should also be taken to make public transport, especially in rural areas, accessible for older persons, particularly in areas where *marshrutkas* are currently the only means of transportation.

105. Engineers and architects should be aware of the implications of their profession on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons. The Independent Expert recommends fostering the application of a human rights-based approach to secure the involvement of architects and engineers in the design of public and private buildings, in conformity with human rights.

106. The Independent Expert notes that there is a need to conduct a vulnerability assessment of older persons affected by climate change in different areas of the country. Steps should be taken to foster the resilience of older persons, to reduce their vulnerability and to ensure that they are fully informed and participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies and decisions that directly affect them. Their experience, knowledge and skills should be part of all phases of any disaster risk reduction strategy, from mapping exercises to implementing solutions at the local level; in this way, local communities will be empowered to develop practical and realistic approaches to the environmental challenges that they face. In emergency situations, humanitarian responses, services, support and information should be suited to the specific needs and conditions of older persons. Adaptation measures require national legal frameworks to protect the rights of older persons who are affected, drawing upon existing standards, guidelines and best practices, such as the Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters, the Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement within States and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

107. The Independent Expert recommends that the Government of Georgia conduct an in-depth assessment of the needs of older internally displaced persons in order to better target specific policies and programmes.

108. The Independent Expert recommends that the legislation on legal guardianship be further amended to be brought fully into line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is essential to raise awareness within the judiciary and to ensure that judges and lawyers are adequately trained to ensure that the rights of older persons with disabilities are fully respected.

5. Social protection and the rights to social security

109. While welcoming the State's recognition that the current pension is insufficient, the Independent Expert calls upon the Government of Georgia to ensure that the reform effectively addresses the risks of old-age poverty, particularly among women, and that it contributes to fostering intergenerational solidarity. She notes that, if necessary, due consideration should be given to alternative options.

110. The Independent Expert calls upon the Government to address persistent poverty among older persons. She emphasizes the need to ensure that the existing system of proxy means-testing better targets the most vulnerable, in particular older persons. Older persons as a group should be taken into account in the development and refinement of social protection policies and measures so that major vulnerabilities can be addressed proactively and efficiently.

6. Education, training and lifelong learning

111. The Independent Expert notes that there is a need for a holistic approach to education and training that takes duly into account the needs of older persons and the benefits for them of continuous learning and vocational and educational training. She recommends that the Government further its analysis of labour market needs in order to align education and vocational training with those requirements.

112. The Independent Expert emphasizes the importance of enabling and incentivizing older persons to remain in the workforce in accordance with their

capacities and preferences. Qualification, retraining and further training and development efforts, including vocational education and training, should be available to all, including older persons.

113. Lifelong learning is essential also for older persons who are no longer part of the workforce, as it enables them to address constantly changing circumstances, requirements and challenges, to participate actively in society and to continue to lead an independent life. The Independent Expert stresses that more efforts are needed to implement a strategy of lifelong learning that adequately responds to the needs of persons as they grow older.

7. Care

114. The Independent Expert calls upon the Government to develop an overall strategic vision of long-term care as a matter of urgency, which should provide overall direction for further development of such services in a comprehensive manner. Further efforts are needed to move from a curative focus to a system that promotes prevention and screening.

115. Municipalities should be allocated the financial resources necessary to ensure that sufficient day-care services are available to meet the needs of older persons and their families. This would also free the capacities of informal carers and allow them to join the workforce or to build a family as essential contributions to both economic and demographic growth.

116. Quality management in residential care, abuse prevention and case management system should be strengthened. The Independent Expert stresses the need to ensure quality control in all settings, including through the establishment of monitoring mechanisms to ensure adequate care of older persons and to be able to effectively address violations of their rights. She also notes that regular contacts with family members are an important element of external control of the well-being of older persons in all residential settings.

117. There is a growing need for support to care for older persons as intergenerational relations change; the Independent Expert therefore calls upon the Government to step up its efforts in this regard. Existing homes for older persons are insufficient; alternatives to institutionalization should be further explored, such as formalizing home care for older persons who need permanent care or assistance, home nursing and social home-help services, housing schemes for persons with special needs, day-care centres, and mobile care. At the same time, more awareness-raising activities should be undertaken for older persons and family member to illustrate the benefits of institutional care. The Independent Expert also notes the importance of consulting and taking into account the views of all age groups when devising policies for older persons, thereby maintaining intergenerational solidarity.

118. The Independent Expert stresses the need to address the serious challenges posed by the lack of availability of qualified nursing staff. The nursing and care professions should be made more attractive, with higher salaries and more career opportunities. She emphasizes the correlation between working conditions of care workers and the quality of care for older persons. The Independent Expert also recommends the introduction of the profession of social worker, and that adequate training be provided to ensure that older persons are able to fully enjoy their human rights.

119. Given the growing number of older patients, the basics of gerontology and geriatrics, and how to interact with older patients, should become part of all medical professional training and pursue a biopsychosocial instead of a mere biomedical approach. The Independent Expert recommends that geriatric medicine be integrated into university curricula to ensure that sufficient qualified specialists in geriatrics are available to meet the needs of an ageing society. Training in gerontology and geriatrics should also be a requirement in the training of health professionals already in the workforce, and should also be given to the different categories of health personnel and community members. Moreover, geriatric wards should be established in all hospitals

to ensure the delivery of comprehensive, compassionate care that recognizes the special needs of older persons with a view to optimizing their quality of life and functional ability.

C. Recommendation for the international community

120. **The international community has an important role to play in supporting the Government of Georgia in implementing its existing international instruments with regard to older persons, in tandem with non-governmental organizations and all civil society actors, in particular to address old-age poverty and to ensure that the rights of older persons in post-emergency situations are adequately protected, for example, by taking into account their medical and nutritional needs, and their mobility challenges, including in their access to essential services. Data on older persons should therefore be systematically collected in such situations.**